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TAGS: [KNNP](#) [MNUC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IS](#) [IR](#) [GM](#)  
SUBJECT: SENIOR BUNDESTAG MP URGES THAW IN U.S.- IRAN  
RELATIONS

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Jeffrey Rathke for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: In a January 26 meeting, Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ruprecht Polenz (CDU) gave the Ambassador a read-out of his mid-January trips to Israel and Iran. Repeatedly commenting that he did not believe only in "containment," Polenz asserted that the Iranian leaders' top priority is the U.S., not Israel, and that their anti-Israel rhetoric is designed to distract the U.S. from "regime change", their greatest fear. Polenz encouraged the USG to begin to work with Iran on issues of mutual interest, such as narcotics in Afghanistan and non-proliferation. Polenz's views on Iran depart sharply from both his geneally Atlanticist approach and the stated policie of the CDU-led Government. END SUMMARY.

2.(SBU) Ambassador Timken hosted Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Ruprecht Polenz (CDU) for unch on January 26 in Polenz's district, Muenster(North-Rhine Westphalia). The Ambassador focuse most of the 90-minute, relaxed conversation on he Middle East, in which Duesseldorf CG and P/E officer (notetaker) also took part.

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Annapolis  
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13. (C) Beginning the conversation with brief comments on his mid-January visit to Israel, Polenz urged the USG to maintain pressure on Israel and the Palestinians in order to keep Arab states behind the Annapolis process. The window for a two-state solution may close, he said, if Israeli settlement construction continues. Polenz expressed support for the Secretary's recent comments on this issue, describing her

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statements as "very precise." He underlined that Germany is doing what it can to encourage the peace process, adding that Germany is Israel's "second best ally" (after the United States). His discussions with Palestinian leaders, Polenz said, led him to believe that these leaders are also committed to the process and to demonstrating responsible leadership. According to Polenz, the Palestinian Authority is well aware that its ability to govern is diminishing daily and that it needs to demonstrate its ability to provide for its own security. Polenz said that he heard uncertainty in some quarters about whether it is the Annapolis process or Iran that is the higher USG priority, as recent USG statements seemed to be more focused on Iran. Polenz noted that Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal recently told him that while Faisal believes President Bush is committed to the Annapolis process, the President seems to be speaking more about Iran. Polenz suggested that the USG focus its statements more on Annapolis than on Iran in order to prevent

misperceptions.

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Iranian Views on Israel, Through Polenz's Prism  
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14. (C) Turning to Iran, Polenz began a long discourse that mixed his broader philosophy on conflict with his views on dealing with Tehran. He asserted that Israel is not as high a priority for Iran as outsiders often assume. He opined that Iranians are not anti-Semitic, because if they were, they would be "against Jews, a religious minority recognized by the Iranian constitution." Iranians are proud, nationalistic, and want two things: to be treated with respect and not to be humiliated. He said he firmly believes that the U.S. is Iran's "first, second, and third priority". He is not "defending the Iranians", he stressed, just expressing his views. The Ambassador questioned Polenz's assertions on Iran, asking how the Iranian leadership could allow Ahmadinejad to repeatedly make threatening statements towards Israel without any consequences. As for the Iranian desire for respect, the Ambassador pointed out that Iranian actions are undermining its quest for respect by, in fact, causing fear in the international community.

15. (C) Polenz added that he is in the process of investigating the veracity of anti-Israel quotes attributed to Ahmadinejad, after several Iranian officials pointed out to him that comments attributed to Ahmadinejad such as "Israel should be wiped off the map" had been taken out of context and actually originated from Ayatollah Khomeini.

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Iran Fixated on "Regime Change"  
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16. (C) Observing that the United States is a very emotional

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issue to the Iranians, Polenz said widespread perceptions exist in Iran that the USG is focused on "regime change." This has led the Iranian leadership to conclude, according to Polenz, that they need to keep Washington's "hands full," to prevent the USG from turning on them. The Iranian regime has concluded that the Iraq war and recent gains by the Taliban in Afghanistan allow the regime to expand its reach, he said.

Polenz suggested that the best way to address this perception is to focus on nonproliferation and put "regime change" on the back burner. The Ambassador reminded Polenz that Secretary Rice has offered repeatedly to meet with Iranian representatives anytime, anywhere if they verifiably suspend their uranium enrichment program.

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Khamenei in Charge; Majles Elections  
"Done Deal" for Hardliners  
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17. (C) Polenz noted that following his January meeting with lead nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, he had concluded that Jalili was not in charge of the nuclear issue. Instead, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has the final say on important matters of policy, he concluded. Various groups are, therefore, competing for Khamenei's attention, several of which are trying to demonstrate that "it pays to be ugly." The increasing high price of oil and gas has given them greater power, according to Polenz.

18. (C) Commenting briefly on the upcoming March Majles elections, Polenz referred to them as "a done deal." He predicted that Ahmadinejad's hard-line faction will be re-elected, demonstrating that the "tough approach pays higher dividends" domestically. Polenz implied that a more conciliatory approach by other states might lead to another outcome.

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Mottaki Delivers Warning on German-Iranian Relations  
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¶9. (C) Recounting his most recent meeting with Foreign Minister Manoucher Mottaki, Polenz said he was "not impressed." Mottaki's main messages were that: 1) Iranians are in the process of reviewing their economic relations and, because they not pleased with Germany's support for sanctions, may look to other trading partners; and 2) the Iranian leadership has not responded to Chancellor Merkel's criticism, but "this will not always be the case."

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Solutions: an Inclusive Strategy, not Containment  
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¶10. (C) Polenz disagreed with the notion that Iran can be contained by Sunni Arab states, because most have significant Shia minorities. His ideal for the Middle East is an inclusive order, that would encompass not only the states within it, but also the United States and possibly even the EU. Some of the smaller Gulf States may only feel comfortable with the United States at the table, he added. Such an order could only be developed by the states themselves, as with the OSCE process in Europe, he stated.

¶11. (C) Europe and the United States have a number of interests, similar to those of Tehran, Polenz emphasized, citing the drug problem in Afghanistan, now an important problem in Iran; therefore, he suggested that "we start to work on them together." This would show the Iranians that they can pursue their interests better through cooperation than conflict. The Ambassador noted that Iran has changed its earlier tough position towards the Taliban to a more ambivalent one. Polenz warned that continuing containment of Iran would strengthen its relations with China and Russia, which is not in the best interest of the West. Responding to the CG's remark that this would amount to a reward for Iran's negative behavior, Polenz agreed, but added that he did "not see diplomatic relations as a reward".

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Syria  
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¶12. (C) Polenz said that during his recent meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem in Berlin, they discussed the presidential elections, diplomatic recognition of Lebanon, and human rights. Muallem avoided any announcement of concrete steps on any of these issues, which Polenz said was a "disappointment".

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Comment  
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¶13. (C) Polenz, who enjoys an elder statesman role in the CDU, has visited Iran multiple times and regularly hosts official Iranian delegations during their visits to Berlin. While generally an Atlanticist, his recent Iran-related comments emphasizing cooperation in limited areas and decreasing pressure have diverged sharply from the policies of the German government, particularly those of his fellow CDU politician Chancellor Merkel. His Iranian interlocutors seem to have made some headway in influencing his thinking; his attempt to pursue the veracity of Ahmadinejad's statements on Israel is especially curious, given the Chancellor's repeated public statements on Iran's threat to Israel.

¶14. (U) This message was coordinated with ConGen Duesseldorf.

TIMKEN JR